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REV. STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH, A PIONEER
PREACHER OF GEORGETOWN.

BY ALLEN C. CLARK.

(Read before the Society, May 16, 1911.)

The greatest biographer of all was the smallest man that ever lived and of the feeblest intellect. This is what Lord Macaulay says of Boswell in his review of the latter's life of Dr. Johnson. Lord Macaulay says that the Doctor wrote all his books "in a learned language—in a language which nobody hears from his mother or his nurse—in a language in which nobody ever quarrels, or drives bargains, or makes love—in a language in which nobody ever thinks." And Goldsmith said to him "Doctor, you make the little fishes talk like whales." I shall tell of Doctor Balch not in Johnsonian style but in the commonplace of careless, everyday remark. And remembering what Lord Macaulay said of the size of the character-stature and the meanness of the intellect of him who "is the first of biographers" I say emphatically at the outset of this slight sketch I disclaim any merit whatever as a biographer.

Biography is a means of fairness and justice. It preserves from the effacement by the tide of time the record of influential life and memorable deeds. It is fair and just to the actor that his achievement be made imperishable. Biography is history. The life told is a segment of the circle of life, social, political and otherwise historical of the time. The one life gives the thought, the ways and the conditions of life concurrent. Biography makes history interesting and impressing. It is as illustration to a heavy discourse.

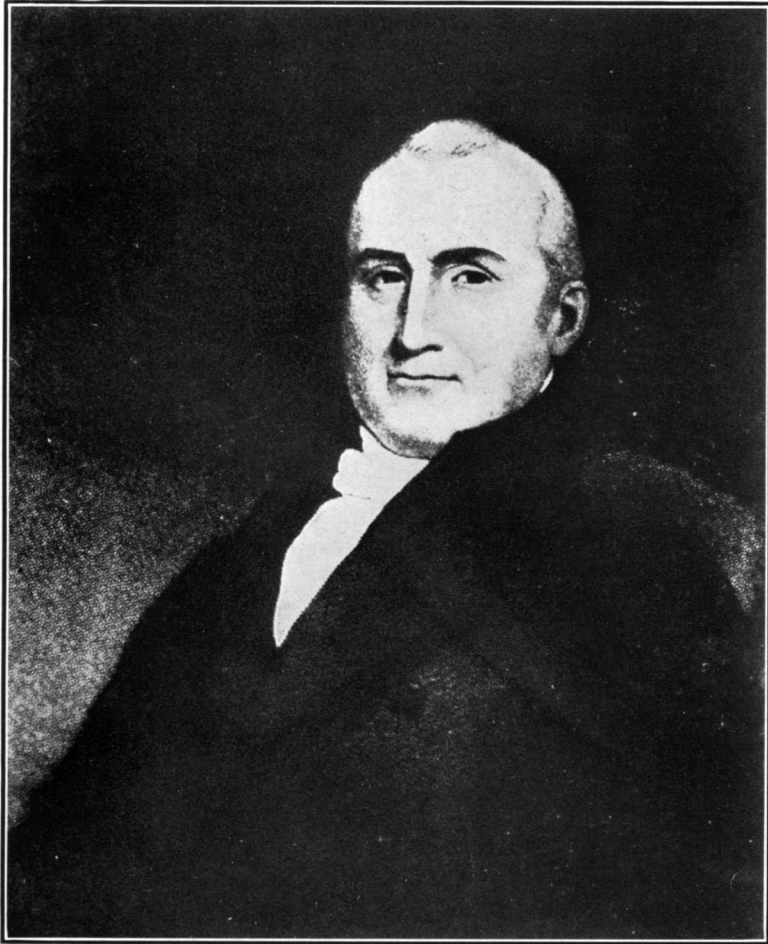
"The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature. . . . He considers no anecdote, no peculiarity of manner, no familiar saying, as too insignificant for his notice, which is not too insignificant to illustrate the operation of laws, of religion, and of education, and to mark the progress of the human mind. Men will not merely be described, but will be made intimately known to us. The changes of manners will be indicated, not merely by a few general phrases, or a few extracts from statistical documents, but by appropriate images presented in every line."—"Task of the Modern Historian," Lord Macaulay.

Dr. Balch had ancestors and progeny and collaterals. All good people who searched the scriptures and never overlooked those with "*multiply*," and that which had "*as the stars of heaven*" was transcendent poetry.

Mr. Balch's grandparents are given as John and Ann Bloomer Balch. His father, James, married Ann Goodwin. A year previous to the marriage, November 2, 1743, he bought on the north side of Deer Creek in Baltimore County, now Harford County, Maryland; his purchase was called "Bond's Hope." In 1769, probably, they removed to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

Dr. Balch's brothers were eminent in the church, and his sister (Jane) the mother of divines. Rev. Hezekiah James was a graduate of Princeton. In the convention at Charlotte, May 19 and 20, 1775, he was of the committee that drew up the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and by his eloquence moved to its unanimous adoption; this declaration was forerunner of that by the assembled delegates of the colonies. Seventy years after his death his memory was honored with a monument.

Rev. James Balch is praised for looks, character and ability. He labored earnestly for the education of all



THE REV. DR. STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH
(From an Engraving by John Sartain)

classes as the hope of the country under a free government. In the biographical sketch of this brother it is told that "A peculiar nervous epidemic prevailed through the region (Kentucky), and during church services strong men became so overcome with a sense of sin that they fell prostrate, as if slain in battle, and women would jerk their heads with such force that their hair would crack like a whip." Many ministers regarded this as a special work of the Holy Spirit, and taught that if this were resisted the spirit would not always strive but take everlasting flight. Rev. Mr. Balch opposed these hallucinations and overcame them.

Another brother, John, had no pulpit authority, yet he was an old bluestocking Presbyterian.

I proceed with this paper with some trepidation, for it is on a religious subject and I may slip as did a lecturer recently. Said he: "Elijah fed the ravens." Said one of the audience: "Excuse me, Sir, the ravens fed Elijah."

The "Genealogy of the Balch Families in America," by Galusha B. Balch, M.D., gives information and I am indebted principally, almost entirely, to the late W. S. Jackson, the eldest son of the late Richard P. Jackson and the brother of Miss Cordelia Jackson, an enthusiastic and efficient historian and esteemed member of this Society. Mr. Jackson, the son, was a printer. He read law. He wrote articles of local history. His accuracy of statement and skill in telling are in line with his father. Jackson, the father, was styled "The Pepys of Georgetown." I remember him well. He was tall and thin, of nervous movement and kindly expression. He looked like a school teacher but he was a lawyer. He saw that the titles of his clients were good. And his good life gave him title to a mansion in the skies.

Rev. Stephen Bloomer Balch was born April 5, 1747, on his parents' place "Bond's Hope." It is in the Susquehanna region. Of "the wild poetic cast of this enchanting spot" the English traveller, Thomas Twining ("Travels in America 100 Years Ago"), makes mention (1796).

Stephen was twenty-two years of age when he with his parents located in the vicinity of Charlotte, North Carolina. His educational facilities were limited but by dint of perseverance he mastered Latin and Greek. The cessation of farming during the winter gave him a season to employ for financial profit. With the fund thus acquired he entered, 1772, the Princeton College, then under direction of John Witherspoon, D.D. Of his classmates were Aaron Burr, to be Vice President of the United States, and William Bradford, Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He graduated, 1774; and a co-graduate was Brockholst Washington, to be a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

In the colony of New Jersey, Mr. Balch might have counted his money and known how much he had. If he turned in the direction of Pennsylvania he would have had to utilize his college mathematics to find out how his funds stood; and if he reached Maryland he would have had another computation for the pound of one colony was not the pound of the others. But when Mr. Balch left college for Lower Marlboro, Calvert County, Maryland, to assume the charge of a classical academy, he had not these financial problems to deal with. He had his diploma and that was about all. His purse was light and his heart was heavy. He had reached Philadelphia. He had determined on the morrow to create some kind of a credit for the needs of his journey by showing his college credentials to the hotel

proprietors. In the morning and before this proposed financial attack he walked the crowded streets perhaps in an effort to screw up his courage. His dejection attracted a man who volunteered the information that he was a merchant from North Carolina which brought the response from Mr. Balch that he had relatives there. The situation was made easy to disclose; and the merchant made good his remark: "Well, they have shown me great kindness lately and perhaps I can pay back some of it by aiding you."

War clouds overhung the sky. Every man needed to be prepared for military service—for protection and patriotism. Mr. Balch assumed the supervision of the Academy, October 1, 1775. He was appointed captain of his pupils of age sufficient to be enrolled in the State militia. He drilled them in military movements and manœuvres. His military career lasted three years, and for two years, December 1, 1775 to December 1, 1777, he was actually of the army and when the British dared to be seen on the shores of the Chesapeake or the Patuxent he with his company of forty or fifty striplings together with the other companies marched out and repelled them. And if the enemy was not much damaged from their fire, the defenders were from exposure to the malaria of the night. When Professor Balch was not training the educational twigs or Captain Balch was not drilling his soldier boys he was studying divinity from the books he borrowed of the Rev. Thomas Clagett, who sowed seed in the soil as a planter and planted seed in the soil not too stony as a bishop.

Late in the year 1777, or early in 1778, he entered the ministry and was licensed by the Donegal Presbytery of Pennsylvania, the same which had authorized his brother, Hezekiah James. Then homeward and south-

ward he wended his way. He reached Georgetown. The only place of worship was that of the German Lutherans, at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Volta Place. The minister granted the request by Colonel Charles Beatty to permit Dr. Balch to preach there Thursday. Pressed to remain the Doctor preached the following Sunday, morning and evening.

Dr. Balch upon his return home in North Carolina found that his father had died and bequeathed his modest fortune to his two daughters except the silver dollar to each of his sons. Dr. Balch let his sisters have his silver dollar. He lingered awhile among his kindred and then went about on a wandering ministry in the Carolinas and Georgia. It was a troublous period. Privation and passion, despair and distrust reigned. It was the depth of the gloom in the Revolutionary War. There were uniformed invaders and there were neighbors who sympathized with the enemy. Dr. Balch, himself, was the victim of rudeness. He had to switch to the emergency—to be a peacemaker in private quarrel; and in the pulpit to revive the dispirited troops. An incident in his experience illustrates the times. He had at night received welcome at the home of a Colonel Williams in his absence. The Colonel awakened him with the remark “I must inform you that I allow no one who is not a Whig to sleep under my roof.” Responded the Doctor “Then let me sleep in peace for I was educated under Dr. John Witherspoon, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.” And this same Colonel when the congregation was in danger of outbreak read the notices and the hymns in his full regimentals and to his belt a loaded pistol and a dangling sword.

The short stop of Dr. Balch in Georgetown in that journey homeward had created a favorable impression

and to such an extent that numerous invitations came to him to return and return permanently. I understand he preached the first sermon of his pastorate, March 16, 1780, and in a small frame used as a school on week days situated on the north side of M near 33d street where afterwards was Cook and Jarboe's carriage factory. This was the beginning of the Presbyterian Church in the District of Columbia. Dr. Balch about this time succeeded to the principalship of an Academy. And he married the daughter of the leading citizen—and was anchored.

Mr. Jackson describes the Columbian Academy. It was "a large two-story frame building, which crowned a round-pointed hill where the Barber house now stands, No. 3241 N street, northwest, which commanded a fine view of the river from the study rooms upstairs. A high porch crowned the entrance, from which hung the bell. Adjoining the school room was a large garden in the shape of an oblong square, about midway of which was planted a jessamine arbor."

Master Wirt attended this institution. The digression is so interesting I give it. Mr. Wirt writes:

"In 1779, I was sent to Georgetown, eight miles from Bladensburg, to school—a classical academy kept by Mr. Rogers. I was placed at boarding with the family of Mr. Schoolfield, a quaker. They occupied a small house of hewn logs at the eastern end of Bridge street. Friend Schoolfield was a well-set, square built, honest-faced and honest-hearted quaker; his wife one of the best of creation. A deep sadness fell upon me, when I was left by the person who accompanied me to Georgetown. When I could no longer see a face I knew, nor an object that was not strange, I remember the sense of total desertion and forlornness that seized upon my heart—unlike anything I felt in after years. I sobbed as if my heart would break for hours together, and was utterly inconsolable notwithstanding the maternal tenderness with

which good Mrs. Schoolfield tried to comfort me. Almost half a century has rolled over the incident, yet full well do I recollect with what gentle affection and touching sympathy she urged every topic that was calculated to console a child of my years. After quieting me in some measure by her caresses, she took down her bible and read to me the story of Joseph and his brethren. It is probable I had read it before, as such things are usually read, without understanding it. But she made me comprehend it; and in the distresses of Joseph and his father I forgot my own. His separation from his family brought him to great honor and possibly mine, I thought, might be equally fortunate. I claim some sense of gratitude. . . . It was so in this instance. I went to see Mrs. Schoolfield after I became a man, and a warmer meeting has seldom taken place between mother and son."

In 1780 Dr. Balch succeeded Mr. Rogers in the principalship or proprietorship of the Academy. The studies consisted of "latin, greek, mathematics, science, surveying and navigation." The students were not all supplied from the thriving town. General Washington sent his wards, George Steptoe and Lawrence Augustine Washington, the sons of his deceased brother Samuel, and they lived at the General's request with the principal. The pastoral and educational duties were too much drain upon his strength or in his own words "I am much worn" and he by correspondence induced Rev. David Wiley, a graduate of Princeton in 1801, to become his successor.

In 1803 or thereabouts the Columbian Library was founded. Dr. Balch was of the founders. A controversy arose over the admission of fiction. Those trustees in favor contended the "effect was to quicken the imagination; those in opposition, that a morbid taste would be created." Dr. Balch, always a stickler for the strictly right, warned "You may do as you please, but mark my words the tale shelf will have all the

custom." Dr. Balch's vote was with the minority. Two thousand volumes were purchased and the collection subsequently reached thirty-five hundred. On Wednesdays the library was open and in the winter it was open twice a week. The library was in the room of the Columbian Academy where were used the globes and the chemical appliances. Rev. Mr. Wiley, the principal, was the librarian. The books were scattered and never regathered, for the principal and librarian had more than even his mighty mind could manipulate successfully, for he was the superintendent of a turn-pike, the editor of an agricultural paper, the post-master, a merchant, a miller and a minister. He did not seem to care whether the school kept or not, when he went surveying, and once on one of these surveys—it was for the government—he did not come back, for he died. In the versatility it is not to be overlooked he was a successful politician and was Mayor of Georgetown, 1811–1812. Mr. Jackson says of the Rev. Mr. Wiley, "His intentions were always good and honorable, and whenever he married a couple in the absence of the pastor he divided the fee with Mr. Balch." It appears, nevertheless, he let Dr. Balch have the undivided privilege of paying a note of two thousand dollars he endorsed for him.

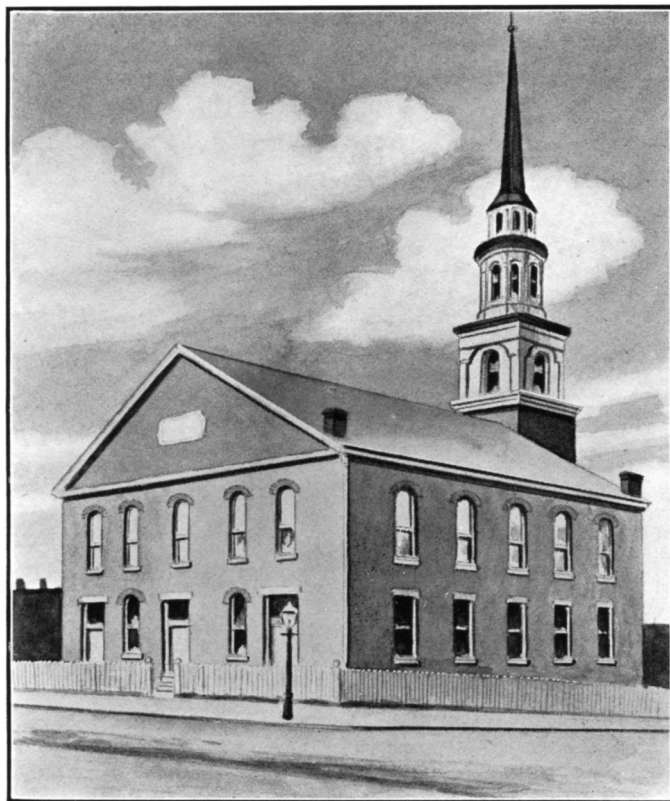
Dr. Balch re-engaged in teaching in the early years to relieve his pressing wants. He had an academy for girls and it was well patronized.

A church was built in 1782 at the southeast corner of Thirtieth and M streets. It was about thirty feet square. In 1793 the church was enlarged by extending the north front; then a bell and a belfry with a spire were added. The removal of the seat of government brought an influx of population and again the church was enlarged. In 1821 an entirely new structure re-

placed the old to accommodate the growing congregation. In 1873, the Bridge Street Church was demolished and name and site were changed to the West Street Church and P Street near Thirty-first. It is one hundred and thirty years since the oldest Presbyterian church in the District was organized and that anniversary was celebrated. At the first communion there were present seven persons and the first session consisted of the pastor and an elder, James Orme.

The names of eminent people are given as worshippers under Dr. Balch's lead. I cannot verify the statements. I omit them. In the list is M. Pichon, an ambassador from France, and Mme. Pichon. Dr. Balch baptized the infant Pichon and on the next morning the Ambassador sent him a note enclosing thirty dollars, being "ten for de leetle boy, ten for the madame and ten for mineself."

Whether the good Doctor with strength of voice and gesticulating, proclaimed the rewards of the righteous life and woes that befall the wicked and by his force made those already advanced in the good way determined to reach even higher elevations and those who would dally with the world, the flesh and the devil reluctantly come along too; or whether he relied more on the strength of reason, softly spoken, which permitted the thoughtful to peacefully decide the issue and the weary to close their eyes and in dreams get to heaven; that I do not know. However, Mr. Cranch, who became the Chief Justice of the District of Columbia, and at the time, 1800, lived in Georgetown because of the scarcity of houses in Washington, has written on this point. However judicially fair Mr. Cranch was it is to have no weight in church criticism for in that no fairness can be expected. Mr. Cranch was a Unitarian. This is what Mr. Cranch writes to his mother:



BRIDGE STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

(Drawing from Old Photograph)

Made for the Col. Hist. Soc. by The New Era Printing Co.

“We have no church here of our own persuasion. The principal inhabitants are Roman Catholics. There is a society of Presbyterians, whose preacher (Mr. Balch) is of the high old Orthodox plan of divinity—preaches without notes, in the enthusiastic style and relies more on the strength of his lungs and the canting tone of his voice than upon any other of the arts of persuasion or conviction. He rings all the changes of the mysterious conception, the doctrine of the Trinity, of justification by faith alone, and the inefficacy of good works, predestination and election. And, in short, whatever doctrine is least consistent with reason pleases him best. I attend him only with disgust. When we remove into the city I shall attend the Episcopalian Society under the instructions of Mr. McCormick, who appeared to be an amiable man, and who has a good wife. They will be our next door neighbors,—And although I cannot subscribe to all the thirty-nine articles, yet I like their mode of worship better than that of any other sect, and shall not suffer small shades of difference in non-essentials to prevent me from a frequent attendance on public worship. As soon as I can find a church whose rational principles shall quadrate with my own, I shall certainly have no objection to fulfill every article which may seem to be incumbent on a professor of our holy religion. The objects of faith must be left to every man’s own conviction and as faith has no connection with nor in any degree dependent on the will it is a subject which ought to be left with man and his Creator. It cannot be regulated by any human tribunal.”

We need not wonder at Mr. Cranch’s “words of learned length” for he was the brother-in-law of Noah Webster; nor his acumen in perceiving the other divine had a good wife, for he was just turned of thirty. Dr. Balch, of course, never saw Mr. Cranch’s letter, for if he did, and restrained his temper, he would have out-patienceed Job, he of century-aged reputation for patience. Dr. Balch and Dr. McCormick were rivals,

rivals in marrying and pretty nearly every couple that the one did not marry, the other did, and in the column of the *National Intelligencer* allotted to the yoked either one or the other's name is connected with the act. The domicil of Dr. Balch was the Gretna Green, the little church around the corner or whatever the verbal symbol may be of a place where two go and as one come away. Whether rich or poor or otherwise those who obtained favor of the Lord by finding a wife took with it the Doctor's blessing. Humorous incidents there are and this among them. A couple from Cooney arrived at the midnight hour. The Doctor was about retiring. He acknowledged the rap on the door from his chamber window. And from the window he conducted the ceremony. Wished them good luck, bade them good night, having first requested that the fee be shoved under the door. In the morning the Doctor saw his two shillings and sixpence. In the early period of the Bridge Street Church the worshippers were of many denominations as there were not enough of a particular creed to warrant a separate church. The policy of the church was helpfulness to all branches of the faith. And in 1829, Dr. Balch gave the organized Methodist Protestants the use of his church until they could provide their own. It is said that Dr. Balch assisted in the establishment of several churches within the jurisdiction of the Synod of Baltimore and that at one he often preached—that at the city of Frederick, Maryland. Dr. Balch educated seventy-four youths for the ministry and equipped many for other professional life. Of his pupils were Masters Beatty and Worthington—in adult years Charles A. Beatty, M.D., and Charles Worthington, M.D. Beatty and Worthington played important parts in Dr. Balch's life; and by the way, Dr. Beatty played the flute finely;

he was a true Orpheus and charmed the ladies, or, as Mr. Wirt nicely says it,* “Dr. Charles Beatty, of Georgetown, brought up his flute and regaled the ladies one evening in the garden with his music.”† Dr. Worthington was the first President of the Medical Society of this District. Doctors Beatty and Worthington were so attached to their preceptor that for medical services they never presented an account and that is why Dr. Balch in the course of time had something he could call his own. A few weeks subsequent to the death of General Washington, Dr. Balch made an address upon his life before an audience of a thousand and more in the open air. His text was from the Book of Esther “For Mordecai, the Jew, was next unto King Ahasuerus and great among the Jews and accepted by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people and speaking peace to all his seed.”‡ Dr. Balch is the first author. The first within the ten miles square when it became the Territory of Columbia to make a publication and that is no small honor. The title page reads:

* Dr. Charles Beatty settled in Georgetown, D. C., in 1782 but he does not seem to have taken any part in the organization of the Medical Society, his name appearing no where upon the record, neither did he join in any of the efforts put forth at that time to “promote the progress of the profession.”

† Dr. Charles Worthington was born in 1759 and settled in Georgetown, D. C., in 1783. He was one of the founders of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia, its first president and re-elected for twelve successive years. He never abandoned the old style of dress, knee-breeches, long stockings, buckles on his shoes and his hair in a queue. He was “full of dignity and seriousness, devoting himself to his profession and to all good works with constancy and patience.”

‡ “Saturday 22^d of Feb’ * * * we proceeded to the Church where after a prayer & hymn, M^r Balch delivered a funeral Sermon—The people of the City & George Town joined to show their respect to the late Gen^l Washington—but the society is too small for them to equal in pomp the other Cities, but they did their best—there were about 1000 people assembled at the Church”—Diary of Mrs. William Thornton.

TWO SERMONS
ON THE
CERTAIN AND FINAL
PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS
By
STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH, A.M.
Pastor
of the
Presbyterian Congregation
George-Town
Psalm x c 11.12

The Righteous Shall Flourish Like a Palm-Tree; He Shall
Grow Like A Cedar in Lebanon.

George-Town: Printed, for the Author, by M. Day and W.
Hancock.

M. DCC, x c 1

This is the

“PREFACE.

“The following Sermons were, at first, delivered by the author to the Presbyterian Congregation, in George-Town. They are now, with a few alterations published, by the particular request. Many probably will charge him with ostentation, merely, because his name is prefixed to them. It was once intended they should been anonymous; but, reflecting, that it is hardly possible for the author of such a publication to remain long concealed; that there is often as much, sometimes more vanity discernable, in withholding, than in prefixing the true signatures; for these reasons, the Sermons tell the name of their author.

“They are now sent out into a carping, sensorious world, attended with his ardent wishes and prayers that they may be blessed for the comfort, edification and establishment of the churches of Christ. He has only to add, that, although what he endeavors to prove may be denied by many pious

persons, yet he earnestly entreats even those to read these discourses with attention, and without prejudice."

The author by date February 1, 1791, inscribes the sermons to the inhabitants of Georgetown but especially to his hearers. The sermons are without doubt strong arguments to those who have the same article of faith.

Ten years after the author ventured again in publication in a series of ten letters addressed to the Rev. Adam Freeman, a member of the Baptist Church. On the title page Mr. Balch says the letters contain

I. A Vindication of the Rights of Infants to the Sacraments of Baptism, according to Scripture.

II. Some Animadversions on a Pamphlet lately published by Mr. Adam Freeman, entitled, "Infant Baptism deceased, or Seven Mountains over against Seven Mountains."

The imprint is Green and English and the date of preface, July 15, 1801.

These two learned ecclesiastics in their controversy alternate letters, displaying an intimate acquaintance with the Bible people, a facility of scriptural quotation, a knowledge of the dead languages and a lively use of their own. The reasoning is convincing and it is odd that each did not convince the other so that they exchanged beliefs; yet, the concluding letters more strongly than intimate the other is possessed by obstinacy and stupidity.

Although Dr. Balch did not marry at what may seem to younger people an early age—thirty-five he was when he first did—nevertheless the first union lasted nearly a half a century. The Doctor married, July 10, 1781, Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of George Beall, the second. She died July 27, 1827; the mother of eleven children. In his eighty-second year he mar-

ried November 5, 1828, Elizabeth King, who survived the ceremony eighteen days; she was fifty-eight years of age. In his eighty-third year he married, November 9, 1830, a widow, to wit, Mrs. Jane Parrott of Easton, Maryland. She had lived in Georgetown. The widow Parrott became the widow Balch.

To his brother, James, from Georgetown, January 14, 1805, he writes:

“My own family is large. We have ten children: two of whom are dead: eight survive. My two eldest sons are now at Princeton College. Alfred the eldest will graduate next Fall. Lewis Penn Witherspoon the Fall after next. They both promise well so far. Two others of my sons George Ninian Beall & Hezekiah James Balch are both in stores in this town & draw wages for their services. My youngest son Thomas Bloomer Balch is at the Latin school in town. My eldest daughter Harriet is in her 20th year & is a fine blooming girl and might be well married if she choose but she appears to be averse to matrimony as yet. We have other two daughters Anne Eleanora & Elizabeth Maria both young, but they are promising. If things are to turn out well we are to expect another son or daughter before long.”

Of these children briefly:

Harriet who the Doctor avers is averse to matrimony first married (1809) James Reid Wilson, a purser in the United States Navy; second, married (1826) to General Alexander Macomb, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army.

Alfred graduated at Princeton (1805). Was a law partner of James Knox Polk. Was by that President appointed a judge of the United States District Court in Florida. He lived in Nashville, Tennessee, and was there a judge.

George was a lawyer of prominence and the father of Admiral Balch.

Lewis Penn Witherspoon graduated from Princeton College, 1805. He studied law with Roger Brooke Taney and became a judge of the highest tribunal in West Virginia.

Thomas Bloomer graduated from Princeton College, 1813. It is said that Daniel Webster characterized him "as the most learned man he ever knew." He was a Presbyterian clergyman of prominence and was pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church of this city.

Anna Eleanora married Captain James Campbell Wilson.

Elizabeth Maria married Rev. Septimus Tustin, a Presbyterian minister, and Chaplain of the United States Senate.

Jane Whann married the Rev. William Williamson, who had five brothers in the Presbyterian ministry.

Hezekiah James died about the age of manhood and *Franklin* in his youth.

Dr. Balch had an island on the Potomac; his isle he called Patmos and he got from it wood for his fires. He had a little farm, ten acres, which he profitably cultivated. It was only a little way away from the town. It had an overlooking view, streams and glens and was so picturesquely charming as to continually prompt the thought God made the country. He called it Wilberforce, and told the British emancipator that and received a grateful acknowledgment. Besides these suburban places was his town house. In 1783 he built his mansion and called it Mamre. It is on the "east side of Duck lane, now Thirty-third street, south of Scotch row, where the canal crosses the street." It had the company of a few cottages and near by a brook went babbling by on its way to the river. In 1799 a street was graded through where the mansion

stood and it was ruined beyond repair. The Doctor took refuge with his neighbors. In these days and until 1807 he had a struggle against destitution, pathetic to relate, and one less courageous might have lost his faith. The Doctor ever had in mind the assurance of the psalmist: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: . . . yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." In 1831 he lived at 3316 N street. In the night a live coal rolled out and set fire to the house. His wife had failed to cover the coals—it was his wife, of course. Descent by the stair case was cut off so he made an ascent through the trap on the roof. He lost many preserved papers, which was a loss of the history of Georgetown.

For his services in the continental army, if that is the proper phrase for the military of the colonies, he received money not worth a continental. He recovered further in a small measure, for the pension applied for, October, 1832, was granted.

The historical sketches of the church all repeat that General Washington attended it, as did Thomas Jefferson and Albert Gallatin. The truth is that Washington did not attend, frequently or infrequently or at all; that Jefferson did not live in Georgetown as stated, nor is there any evidence he went to the church: Gallatin resided remotely and did not worship in that church or in any other—he was a free-thinker.

The Rev. Wallace Radcliffe (November 15, 1903) states in an address at the Centennial Anniversary of the New York Avenue Church that the members of the Georgetown Church living in *this* neighborhood, so far away for regular attendance, were encouraged by their pastor to organize a church, which they did in 1819, as the Second Presbyterian Church; and that, in

the beginning, the son, Rev. Thomas Bloomer Balch, was eminently helpful in the ministrations.

The portrait of Dr. Balch is by Peale in 1780 and is reproduced in engraving by John Sartain. With it would tally a picture in the mind created by the imagination from the details of his life story. The picture exhibits large frame and robust health; a face full in outline and of simplicity, sympathy and strength. He was steadfast to his own creed and was tolerant of others in theirs. He was generous and he would take from his own purse when poorly lined; and, shock to credulity! he, a Presbyterian, subscribed to build an Episcopal church and assisted at the dedication. He was an affectionate and indulgent parent, as is proven by the sacrifice he made in his most hard pressed period to college-educate his sons. He was affable; and a favorite with his clerical foes. He had "the god of moments"—wit; that fortune good or ill could not crowd off. He was friendly to the Georgetown College, visited it, and dined with the priests of Catholic Trinity Church. They apologized for the appearance of the table on fast day. The Doctor wittily responded "Well, well, brothers; if you call this fast day what do you have on feast day?" At the time of the fire he landed on his feet by being lowered from the roof; viewing the destruction he remarked—"I have lost all but my parrot." The bird was Mrs. Parrot, otherwise Mrs. Balch, number three. In the pulpit he was "arrayed in gown and bands" and must have made an impressive appearance. He was impassioned in his delivery or gentle as appropriate. He could solve the most complicated mathematical problems when chewing tobacco and he could chew tobacco without the accompaniment of mathematics or anything else. If this is a fault I am pleased it is set down for I do not wish

to make the Doctor perfect; for I think a minor fault in a man is an escape for greater transgressions. Besides in the beginning (April 12, 1780) when called to preach in Georgetown he was promised for his support annually, 2,200 lbs. in tobacco and 75 in specie. It is said the Doctor preached his mightiest sermon the Sunday after the theft of some Bibles and hymnals. I am willing to doubt this, for the seizure of the truth and praise was a dissemination, even if in an unusual way and did not warrant such a pulpit condemnation.

The Doctor's pastorate period could and certainly must have given him an intimate relationship with three generations of some families. It must have grown an affection allied to kinship. His influence and usefulness as the years succeeded surely increased progressively. I do not think in all literary creation that there is a lovelier character than Dr. Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield. And that gentle character of the imagination is a prototype and a parallel to the subject of this sketch who was in reality—except our hero did not have that Whiston theory of one wife. An epitaphic sentiment is engraved on a tombstone of a reverend gentleman (Rev. Enoch Pond, died 1807):

“Generous in temper, correct in science, and liberal in sentiment, the gentleman, the scholar, and the Minister of the Sanctuary.”

It aptly describes the life of the Rev. Stephen Bloomer Balch.

On Sunday morning, September 22, 1833, the venerable Doctor while preparing for the church service was stricken with apoplexy and at nine o'clock died. He had lived so long, and so gently, it did seem he would live on forever.

“Some few, by temperance taught, approaching slow,
To distant fate by easy stages go.”—Byron.



RESIDENCE OF REV. DR. STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH AT THE TIME OF HIS DECEASE
No. 3302 N St.

It was a shock to the congregation, to the churches and to the citizens. The respect and the love for him was by all, although some differed in creed and opinion. To the funeral services were invited the friends, the clergy of the different denominations and the public.

On Monday, the 23d, the board of aldermen and common council of Georgetown passed this resolution:

“That we have learned with deep regret the death of our aged and venerable fellow citizen, Doctor Stephen Bloomer Balch, who for more than fifty three years has been a useful and honored minister of religion in the town, illustrating the holy profession he made through his long career by a life of uniform piety toward God, and benevolence, liberality and kindness to his fellow men descending to his tomb full of years, and rich in the reverence, esteem and love of the whole community. *Resolved*, that as a testimony of respect to his memory, the members and officers of this corporation will attend his funeral tomorrow (Tuesday) at 10 O’clock a. m. *Resolved*, that the clerk of the corporation be requested to transmit a copy of these resolutions to the family of the deceased.”

Mr. Jackson says:

“The town was draped in mourning, business places were closed, and all the bells tolled as the remains of this faithful apostle of God was carried from his residence No. 3302 N street, to the church where he had so often performed the last sad rites to hundreds and thousands. Ministers of all denominations, including eight priests representing the Catholic Church, who loved and venerated him in life, joined in the funeral cortège. When the hearse reached the church the procession was still forming at the residence.”

“The funeral sermon, an eloquent discourse on the life and services of deceased, was preached by Rev. Elijah Harrison, of Alexandria, Va. from Acts VII. 2: ‘And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentations over him.’ After the funeral sermon his remains were incased in the front wall of the church.”

A monument was placed October, 1835, in front of the church against the wall between the main entrance doors. It now rests over the remains at Oak Hill Cemetery, partially covered with ivy. It is of white marble. It has a wreath beautifully sculptured and this inscription:

Sacred

To the memory of
STEPHEN B. BALCH, D.D.
 who died September 22nd. 1833,
 In the 87th. year of his Age.

He was the founder of this church,
 And for more than half a century
 Its revered Pastor
 He planted the gospel in this town,
 And his example was for many years
 A light to its inhabitants.
He being dead yet speaketh.

Reliquiae mortales
STEPHANI BLOOMER BALCH, D.D.
 Sub hoc marmore
 Inhumantur
 His children have erected this tablet.
 To record
 The virtue of the dead and the
 Gratitude of the living.

When the Church was razed in the early part of 1873, the remains were re-interred in the Presbyterian cemetery, on Thirty-third street, near the Chapel. William W. Corcoran requested in the spring of 1874 that he be permitted to make a removal to the Oak Hill Cemetery and to Rev. Thomas B. Balch wrote:

“I knew your father from boyhood, and the sentiments of profound esteem with which at an early age I regarded him were undiminished at the close of his protracted and exemplary life.”

The removal was made June 18, 1874. The site is near the Swiss Chapel and in the chapel is a mural tablet under the direction of Mr. Corcoran bearing this inscription:

In Honor of
STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH, D.D.
Born
On "Deer Creek" near Balt: Md.,
April, A. D. 1747,
Came to Georgetown, D. C.,
March 16th, A. D. 1780,
Died September 22, A. D. 1833.
He planted the Gospel in
Georgetown; Founded
"The Bridge Street Presbyterian Church;"
And was for more than 50 years
Its Pastor.
In life he Practiced what he Preached.
No Eulogy can add to such
A Record.

Mr. Jackson says that the purpose of his sketch is to arouse the Presbyterians of the District and the citizens of Georgetown to erect a monument in a public place. I think that will hardly ever be, although there are yet some reservations not encumbered by metal and stone. There may never be a monument that the eyes may see, but there is and ever will be in the hearts of those who spring from them who saw him face to face and in the hearts of those who are devoted to the Presbyterian church, a monument of affection.